

Old Series. No. 51. Vol. 11.

I find no fault with her and so much vanity. —  
 Peckman's praises have not displeased her. — She



has asked me for his letter to read once more.— And she has not yet returned it to me, but keeps it in her work-basket!

I don't care, for my part I value the thing! Jan. 8.—My farewell sermon was accompanied with the tears of most of my hearers. I see now at last that my parishioners love me. They have expressed their obligations on all hands, and loaded me with gifts. I never before had, such an abundance of provisions in the house, so many dainties of all kinds, and so much wine. A hundredth part of my present plenty would have made me need myself over-fortunate in past days. We are really swimming in plenty. But a goodly portion has already been disposed of. I know some poor families in C—, and Jenny knows even more than I. The dear people share in our pleasures.

I was moved to the utmost by my sermon.— With tears I wrote it. It was a sketch of my whole past course from my call and settlement. I am driven from the vineyard as an unprofitable servant, and yet I have not laboured as a hireling. Many noble vines have I planted, many dead weeds cut away. I am driven from the vineyard where I have watched, and taught, and warned, and comforted and prayed. I have shrunk from no sick bed. I have strengthened the dying for the last conflict with holy hope. I have gone after sinners. I have not left the poor desolate. I have called back the lost to the way of life. Ah! all these souls that were knit to my soul, are torn from me—why should not my heart bleed? But God's will be done! Gladly would I now offer to take charge of the parish without salary, but my successor has the office. I have been used to poverty from my birth, and care has never forsaken me since I stepped out of my boy's shoes. I have enough for myself and daughters in little Alfred's board. We shall be able indeed to lay up something. I would never again complain of wind and weather beating against my gray hairs, could I only continue to break the bread of life to my flock.

Be it so! I will not murmur. The tear which drops upon this page, is no tear of discontent. I ask not for riches and good days, nor have I ever asked. But, Lord! Lord! drive not thy servant forever from thy service although his powers are small. Let me again enter thy vineyard, and with thy blessing win souls.

Jan. 13.—My journey to Trowbridge has turned out beyond all expectation. I arrived late with weary feet at the pleasant little old city, and could not rouse myself from sleep until late the next morning. After I had put on my clean clothes (I had not been so finely dressed since my wedding day—the good Jenny shows a daughter's care for her father,) I left the inn and went to Mr. Withell's. He lives in a splendid, great house. He received me somewhat coldly at first; but when I mentioned my name, he led me into his little office. Here I thanked him for his great goodness and consideration, told him how I happened to give the bond, and what hard fortunes had hitherto been mine. I then laid my twelve pounds upon the table.

Mr. Withell looked at me for awhile in silence with a smile, and with some emotion. He then extended his hand, and shook mine, and said, "I know all about you. I have informed myself particularly about your circumstances. You are an honest man. Take your twelve pounds back. I cannot find it in my heart to rob you of your New Year's present. Rather let me add a pound to it, to remember me by."

He arose, brought a paper from another room opened it and said, "You know this bond and your signature? I give it to you and your children." He tore the paper in two, and placed it in my hand.

I could find no words, I was too deeply moved. My eyes filled. He saw that I would thank him, but could not, and he said, "Hush! hush! not a syllable, I pray you. This is the only thanks I desire of you. I would gladly have forgiven poor Brook the debt, had he only dealt frankly with me."

I don't know a more noble hearted man than Mr. Withell. He was too kind. He would have me relate to him much of my past history. He introduced me to his wife, and to the young gentleman his son. He had my little bundle, containing my old clothes, brought from the inn, and kept me at his house. The entertainment was princely. The chamber in which I slept, the carpet, the bed, were so splendid and costly that I hardly dared to make use of them.

The next day Mr. Withell sent me home in his own elegant carriage. I parted with my benefactor much moved. My children wept with me for joy when I showed them the bond. "See," said I, "this light piece of paper was the heaviest burden of my life, and now it is generously cancelled. Pray for the life and prosperity of our deliverer!"

Jan. 16.—Yesterday was the most remarkable day of my life. We were sitting together in the forenoon; I was rocking the cradle, Polly was reading aloud, and Jenny was seated at the window with her needle, when she suddenly jumped up, and then fell back again deadly pale into her chair. We were all alarmed, and cried, "What is the matter?" She forced a smile, and said, "He is coming!"

The door opened, and in came Mr. Fleetman in a beautiful travelling-cloak. We greeted him right heartily, and were truly glad to see him so unexpectedly, and as it appeared, in so much better circumstances than before. He embraced me, kissed Polly, and bowed to Jenny, who had not yet recovered from her agitation. Her pale looks did not escape him. He inquired seriously about her health. Polly replied to his questions, and he then kissed Jenny's hand as though he would beg her pardon for having occasioned her such alarm. But there was nothing to be said about it, for the poor girl grew red again like a new blushing rose.

I fed for cake and wine, to treat my guest and benefactor better than on former occasions; but he declined, as he could not tarry long, and he had company at the inn. Yet at Jenny's request, he sat down and took some wine with us. As he had spoken of the company which had come with him, I supposed that it must be a comedians, and inquired whether they intended to stop and play in C—, observing that place was too poor. He laughed out, and replied, "Yes, we shall play a comedy, but although gratis." Polly was beside herself, with joy, for she

had long wanted to see a play. She told Jenny who had gone for the cake and wine. Polly inquired whether many actors had come with him. "A gentleman and lady," said he, "but excellent players."

Jenny appeared unusually serious. She cast a sad look at Fleetman, and asked "And you—will you also appear?" This was also said in that tone peculiarly soft, yet very penetrating, which I have seldom observed in her, and only upon rare occasions, and at the most serious moments.

Poor Fleetman himself trembled at her tone, so like the voice of the angel of doom. He looked up to her with an earnest gaze, and appeared to struggle with himself for an answer, and then advancing towards her a step, he said, "Miss, by my God and yours, you alone can decide that!"

Jenny dropped her eyes. He continued to speak. She answered, I could not comprehend what they were about. They spoke—Polly and I listened with the greatest attention, but we neither of us understood a word, or rather we heard words without any sense. At last, yet Fleetman and Jenny appeared not only to understand one another perfectly, but what struck me as very strange, Fleetman was deeply moved by Jenny's answers, although they expressed the veriest trifles. At last Fleetman clasped his hands passionately to his breast, raised his eyes streaming with tears, to heaven and with an impressive appearance of emotion, exclaimed, "Then am I indeed unhappy!"

Polly could hold out no longer. With a comical vivacity, she looked from one to the other, and at last cried, "I do believe that you are beginning to play already!"

He pressed Polly's hand and said, "Ah! that it were so!" I put an end to the confusion by pouring out the wine. We drank to the welfare! She laid her hand upon her heart, cast down her eyes and drank.

Fleetman immediately became more composed. He went to the cradle, looked at the child, and when Polly and I had told him its history, he said to Polly, with a smile, "Then you have not discovered that I sent you this New Year's present?"

We all exclaimed in utter amazement, "What you?" He then proceeded to relate what follows: "My name," said he, "is not Fleetman. I am Sir Cecil Fairfax. My sister and myself have been kept out of our rightful property by my father's brother, who took advantage of certain unpropitious condition in my father's will, and involved us in a long and embarrassing law suit. We have hitherto lived with difficulty upon the little property left us by our mother, who died early. My sister has suffered most from the tyranny of her uncle, who was her guardian and who had destined her for the son of an intimate and powerful friend of his. But my sister, on the other hand, was secretly contracted to the young Lord Sandown, whose father, then living, was opposed to their marriage. Without the knowledge either of my uncle or the old lord, they were secretly married. The little Alfred is their son. My sister, under the pretence of benefiting her health and availing herself of a sea-bathing, left the house of her guardian and put herself under my protection. When the child was born, our great concern was to find a place for it where it would have the tenderest care. I accidentally heard a touching account of the poverty and humanity of the parish minister of C—, and I came hither to satisfy myself."

"The manner in which I was treated by you decided me. I have forgotten to mention that my sister never returned to her guardian. For about six months ago I won the suit against him, and entered into possession of my patrimony. My uncle instituted a new suit against me for withdrawing my sister from his charge; but the old Lord Sandown died suddenly a few days ago of apoplexy, and my brother-in-law has made his marriage public. So that the suit falls to the ground, and all cause for keeping the child's birth secret is removed. Its parents have now come to take away you and your family, if the proposal I make you shall be accepted."

"During the lawsuit in which I have been engaged, the living, which is in the gift of my family, has remained unoccupied. I have at my disposal this situation which yields over two hundred pounds per annum. You, sir, have lost your place. I shall not be happy unless you come and reside near me and accept this living!"

God only knows how I was affected at these words. My eyes were blinded with tears of joy. I stretched out my hands to the man who came a messenger from heaven. I fell upon my breast. Polly threw her arms around him with a cry of delight. Jenny thankfully kissed the baronet's hand. But he snatched it from her with visible agitation and left us.

My happy children were still holding me in their embrace, and we were still mingling our tears and congratulations, when the baronet returned, bringing his brother-in-law Lord Sandown, with his wife. The latter was an uncommonly beautiful young lady. Without saluting us she ran to the cradle of her child. She knelt down over the little Alfred, kissed his cheeks and wept freely with mingled pain and delight. Her lord raised her up, and had much trouble in composing her.

When she had recovered her composure and apologized to us all for her behaviour, she thanked first me and then Polly, in the most touching terms. Polly disowned all obligation, and pointed to Jenny, who had withdrawn to the window and said, "My sister there has been its mother!"

Lady Sandown approached Jenny, gazed at her long in silence and with evidently delighted surprise, and then glanced at her brother with a smile, and folded Jenny in her arms. "The dear Jenny, in her modesty, scarcely dared to look up. 'I am a debtor,' said my lady, 'but the service you have rendered to a mother's heart it is impossible for me to repay. Become a sister to me, lovely Jenny; sisters can have no obligation between them.' As they embraced each other, the baronet approached. 'There stands my poor brother,' said my lady, 'as you are now my sister, he may stand nearer to your heart, dear Jenny may he not?'"

Jenny blushed and said, "He is my father's benefactor."

"Will you not be," replied the lady, "the benefactress of my poor brother? Look kindly on him. If you only knew how he loves you!"

The baronet took Jenny's hand and kissed it, and said, as Jenny struggled to withdraw it—"Miss, will you be kind to me? I am unhappy without this hand." Jenny, much disarmed, let her hand remain in his. The baronet then led my daughter to me and begged me for my blessing.

"Jenny," said I, "it depends upon thee. Do we dream? Canst thou love him? Do thou decide."

She then turned to the baronet, who stood before her, deeply agitated, and cast upon him a full penetrating look, and then took his hand in both hers, pressed it to her breast, looked up to heaven, and softly whispered, "God has decided."

I blessed my son and my daughter. They embraced. There was a solemn silence. All eyes were wet.

Suddenly Polly sprang up, laughing through her tears, and flung herself upon my neck, while she cried! "There, we have it! The New Year's present! Bishop's mitres upon bishop's mitres!"

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